

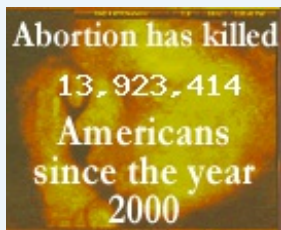
A True Believer's Blog



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Regarding Civility

Regarding Civility

January 26, 2010 — wickle

I realize that I haven't had a lot to say here for a few weeks. There are many reasons, and it might be even longer before my next post.

However, this seemed worth a mention. This week is "No Name-Calling Week," part of an anti-bullying campaign. The organizers linked to a video on their Facebook page, which is well worth viewing.

First, here's the video that started the conversation. It's a poem by a 15-year-old boy who's concerned about dolphins.

There it is. In response to the comments he received on it, the comments were deleted, no more comments are taken, and [another video](#) was made.

As I understand it, the comments that you'll see on that second page were real ones that he received.

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There is something fundamentally wrong with a person who needs to tear down someone else just because that person has a lisp, writes poetry, or whatever else. If you don't like it, click on something else.

This kid did something bold. He put himself out there for the world to see and put his creativity on very public display. At 15, my poems were kept very safely in notebooks where no one else was going to see them. I commend this guy.

More than that, though, I just don't understand how someone finds it satisfying on any level to wander around the Internet looking for people to insult. That's a very empty life, isn't it?

Thankfully, Oceanking97 was able to make something productive out of what happened. He has been able to make this second video.

Other kids, when bullied online, don't find a way to escape. Some of them end up like Phoebe Prince.

Dead.

Posted in [WordPress Political Blogs](#), [life](#), [principle](#). Tags: [bullying](#), [civility](#), [Cyberbullying](#), [Oceanking97](#), [Phoebe Prince](#), [YouTube](#). 12 Comments »

Duchemin's Law of Bureaucracy

January 13, 2010 — wickle

A friend and former Bible-study-group-mate of mine might well have coined a new law of government.

“As the size of total government increases, the likelihood that any given action will be simultaneously mandated and prohibited increases exponentially.”

You should check out [the rest of the post](#), too.

Posted in [Bible](#), [Blogroll](#), [politics](#), [religion](#). Tags: [Duchemin's Law of Bureaucracy](#), [Michael Duchemin](#). 3 Comments »

Hillary Clinto...

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If you can't take it ...

January 9, 2010 — wickle

Until a couple days ago, I'd never heard of Mark Fiore or his political satire cartoons. To be perfectly honest, I think he's an incredible bore with nothing interesting to say, now that I have heard of him.

However, he's apparently set the conservative blogs afire with a video he put up on npr.org called "[Learn to Speak Tea Bag](#)." Before you watch that, though, bear in mind that it is stupid and might well offend you.

As I read some of the vitriol spewed at this piece, though, I have to wonder ... is the Right really that thin-skinned? Seriously?

The people who refer to Dummocrats, "Dingy Harry" [Reid], Airhead America, Daily Kooks, and so many other nicknames can't take a little cartoon? That's kind of sad.

For my own part, I look at this and wish it was never made. It serves no purpose, informs no one, and is simply there to mock. That's not good satire, it's juvenile. I don't see that that piece by Mark Fiore is any better than the garbage served up on talk radio. (With one exception — it's about 90 seconds long rather than three hours.)

That being said, I'm not sure that it's any worse.

Then again, I like to think that I have a pretty good record of calling this stuff out from either side.

So, while I agree with critics that the video is stupid, and frankly I'm disappointed that NPR would put something so juvenile on its site, I find it difficult to work up much sympathy for a lot of the people who now claim that their fragile feelings are hurt by the mockery. I was always taught growing up that if you can't handle the same kind of teasing that you're doing, you'd better stop.

In response, by the way, to the idea that NPR wouldn't have any kind of anti-Obama

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mockery, here's [another video](#) by the same character. It's slightly better ... at least the bit about the Peace Prize approaches clever.

[Loud Protests on NPR's 'Tea Party' Cartoon](#)

Posted in [WordPress Political Blogs](#), [politics](#), [principle](#), [stupid](#). Tags: [Mark Fiore](#), [NPR](#), [satire](#). [4 Comments »](#)

[Would Jesus Wear a Rolex?](#)

January 8, 2010 — wickle

Neither a new song (I've loved it for more than twenty years now) nor an official video, but someone put together some good visuals for Ray Stevens' pointed satire:

Posted in [Jesus](#), [fun](#), [principle](#), [religion](#). Tags: [country music](#), [music video](#), [Ray Stevens](#). [3 Comments »](#)

[The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators](#)

January 6, 2010 — wickle

Indeed, they did.

[Rantcaster](#) posted this, and I think he has some very good points. I'm not a huge fan of term limits in general, because I think that the election is supposed to serve that function. On the other hand, the system is badly broken because of people who stay in Congress for decade after decade and make

themselves more powerful on and on.

That being the case, I'm okay with limiting terms. Certainly, the rest of his points are excellent, especially about pensions, health insurance, and the like. Here's his post:

Congressional Reform Act of 2010

1. Term Limits: 12 years only, one of the possible options below.

A. Two Six year Senate terms

B. Six Two year House terms

C. One Six year Senate term and three Two Year House terms

Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, serve your term(s), then go home and back to work.

2. No Tenure / No Pension:

A congressman collects a salary while in office and receives no pay when they are out of office.

Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, serve your term(s), then go home and back to work.

3. Congress (past, present & future) participates in Social Security.

All funds in the Congressional retirement fund moves to the Social Security system immediately. All future funds flow into the Social Security system, Congress participates with the American people.

Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, server your term(s), then go home and back to work.

4. Congress can purchase their own retirement plan just as all Americans.

Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding

Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, serve your term(s), then go home and back to work.

5. Congress will no longer vote themselves a pay raise. Congressional pay will rise by the lower of CPI or 3%. Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, serve your term(s), then go home and back to work.

6. Congress loses their current health care system and participates in the same health care system as the American people. Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, serve your term(s), then go home and back to work.

7. Congress must equally abide in all laws they impose on the American people. Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, serve your term(s), then go home and back to work.

8. All contracts with past and present congressmen are void effective 1/1/11. The American people did not make this contract with congressmen, congressmen made all these contracts for themselves. Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, serve your term(s), then go home and back to work.

Any thoughts?

Posted in [Blogroll](#), [WordPress Political Blogs](#), [politics](#), [principle](#). Tags: [Congress](#), [reform](#), [Senate](#), [term limits](#). [12 Comments »](#)

Comment Policy

January 5, 2010 — wickle

I really can't believe that I'm putting up this post, but I promised someone that I would ... so here it is.

For the most part, I have a very simple view of how people should comment on blogs, and so that's all I hold: show some respect. To say more than that seems silly for a blog. I don't take myself nearly so seriously that I think I should need a comments policy

Apparently, though, I have to spell that out in a little more detail. So, here goes.

This blog does not exist so that people can insult me. It does not exist so that people can come fight. If you want to have an honest discussion and exchange, then that's great. However, I like the analogy that has come up in other places: treat this as my living room. If someone were speaking crudely in my home, I'd ask him/her to leave. If it went to far, I'd be more forceful.

It is a big deal to me that we respect people, all people, by leaving their names alone. I've written about this [before](#), and I do apply it as a very strict rule on comments. I have only banned two commenters, and both of them have been because they couldn't handle this very simple rule.

Mike Huckabee's name is Mike Huckabee. Not "Huck-a-[whatever]." Not Huckleberry. Whether you like him or not, call him by his actual name.

The same applies for any number of other people. As much as I dislike Tom Tancredo, his name is not "Tancrazy." Rush Limbaugh is not "Flush," or any of the various changes made to his last name, most of which are ones that I won't repeat since I want this blog to stay family-friendly. Barack Obama is not named "Nobama," "Zerobama," or any of the other nicknames thrown at him.

As far as I'm concerned, that stuff should have been left behind in third grade. If you're still there, then leave your comments

elsewhere.

If I've never seen a comment from you, your comment should post through. I don't moderate for first-time comments. I do filter for language. Because of the way that works, you might find your perfectly-innocent comment in moderation because you used a word like "assume" or while referring to [Numbers 25:1](#). Sorry about that. I'll try to get it approved as soon as I can.

If, in fact, you are swearing, then I reserve the right to edit or simply delete your comment. I don't like profanity. I don't welcome it in my living room or at my blog.

I have also made mention of a certain rape victim in previous posts. Since people familiar with that case (and possibly the rapist himself) have commented, I have put the victim's name in that moderation filter. It is possible that that will trip someone up, since her name might be used perfectly innocently. (I've used the nickname "Ann" for her ... the way the filter works, blocking "Ann" would also catch any word with those letters.)

Comments should relate to the post. If you want to talk about something else entirely, then do it somewhere else, especially if what you want to say is that the post is stupid because you want to talk about something else. Get your own blog. Write about it there.

I have no use for comments that consist of nothing but bigotry. Racial, sexual, religious, or anything else ... just go away with that malarkey.

Lastly ... I have banned exactly two users in the whole time that I've had this blog. One of them was a simple matter of his spewing profanity and names. Based on his blog and the rambling nature of the comment, I assume that he was high at the time.

The other keeps on coming back ... I'm not sure why. He was warned many times that he was trying my patience and that I would not put up with much more. He chose to be banned, yet he still whines about it. A basic failure to show any kind of respect played into that.

Since, in fact, it was to him that I promised to put up this post, here is how he got himself banned:

During the blog tour for [Stonewall Hinkleman and the Battle of Bull Run](#), he decided to throw in a question about the President and his “bullying” of the country. That comment was removed for being too far off-topic.

He did the [same thing](#) when I posted a couple silly videos.

Then, there are the threads which actually earned him the ban. Make what you will of them. [Here here](#) and [here](#). I did, however, allow [one more comment](#) through just to show what kind of filth he throws into my spam filter, a dozen or so times each week.

Given the topic, I will allow you (and you know who you are) to comment ... IF YOU FOLLOW THE RULES ... on this post. If you’d like to make a case for why I should put up with your garbage, then do it here. And only here.

Anyway ... there it is. My comments policy post. I still think that if I just said, “Act like a mature grown-up” it would be more than sufficient.

Posted in [stupid](#). [2 Comments](#) »

Blackwater: Above the law

January 1, 2010 — wickle

The corporation formerly known as Blackwater, which conducts military operations for profit (but don’t dare call them mercenaries!), scores more points against the very concept of justice.

Although (from the [New York Times](#))

Investigators concluded that the guards had indiscriminately fired on unarmed civilians in an unprovoked and unjustified assault near the crowded traffic circle on Sept. 16, 2007 [...]

... charges have been dismissed against five guards for that shooting. Seventeen Iraqi

civilians dead and twenty more wounded, and there is, according to a federal Judge Ricardo M. Urbina, to be no trial at all.

Iraqi officials, of course, wanted to try the guards in their own courts since the crime was committed there. The Bush administration refused, thus proving that the idea that we were there to establish a sovereign government was a joke. With this, the judge has ruled that the Justice Department mishandled the witness statements. Indeed, this kind of incompetence has been rampant in the Justice Department in recent years (the same kind of problem led to the dismissed conviction of former Sen. Ted Stevens).

One wonders about the [Iraqi reaction](#) to this kind of thing, and can hardly be surprised by this:

The incident calcified anti-American sentiment in Iraq and elsewhere, raised Iraqi concerns about the extent of its sovereignty because Blackwater guards had immunity from local prosecutors and reopened a debate about American dependence on private security contractors in the Iraq war.

Many Iraqis also viewed the prosecution of the guards as a test case of American democratic principles, which have not been wholeheartedly embraced, and in particular of the fairness of the American judicial system.

A test case of American democratic principles. And we failed.

This is a case of people being allowed to commit murder, and getting away with it. One victim questions:

“What are we — not human?” asked Abdul Wahab Adul Khader, 34, a bank employee who was shot in the hand while driving his car through the traffic circle.

“Why do they have the right to kill people? Is our blood so cheap? For America, the land of justice and law, what does it mean to let criminals go? They were chasing me and shooting at me. They were determined to kill me.”

I think that that more or less covers it. Are the Iraqis human? Do they deserve the protection of law?

Apparently not.

Posted in [Iraq](#), [WordPress Political Blogs](#), [life](#), [politics](#), [principle](#), [war](#), [war on terror](#). Tags: [Blackwater](#), [Justice Department](#), [mercenaries](#), [Xe Corporation](#). [9 Comments »](#)

Merry Christmas

December 23, 2009 — wickle

(Reposted from [last year](#).)

A few millenia ago, Adam and Eve (our great-great-great-great ... uhh ...you get the idea! ... -grandparents) used to walk around in the Garden of Eden chatting with God. I have no idea what this looked like, but I do know that it has to have been good. Think about it ... God, the Creator of the universe, is right there, hanging out with the man and woman that He made.

Then, of course, Adam and Eve messed it up. Before we get to be too hard on them, though, let's bear in mind that the only reason they were the first sinners is because they were the first people.

Still, because of their sin we all have had to live with the curse from the Fall, and the separation from God. However, He didn't just curse mankind. He also cursed the serpent, and it is that curse that deserves particular attention today ([Genesis 3:15, NIV, courtesy of BibleGateway.com](#)):

“And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring ^[a]
and hers;

he will crush ^[b] your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

With this is foretold the events we commemorate today — there is hope despite the Fall of mankind. Satan will be crushed.

For millenia thereafter, mankind lived with a separation from God. We didn’t get to walk with Him, hang out with Him in the fields, or any other such thing ... until about 2000 years ago.

A woman in Bethlehem, still a virgin, gave birth to the Son of God and named Him Jesus. For a little more than thirty years, some of mankind could again know a part of the experience Adam and Eve had known long before. It’s not clear how many people really knew what they were experiencing — some knew better than others, of course.

For about thirty years, Jesus walked among us. It was by no means the same as in Eden, but once again God walked with mankind. For a time, God was right there, bodily, among the human race.

Can you fathom what that must have meant?

God came back. Not because we deserved Him, but because of His absolutely mind-blowing grace. (By the way, if His grace doesn’t blow your mind, you might want to spend some more time thinking about it!)

He gave us a taste of what eternity can be. A few people knew Him, and got to touch Him and be His friends.

Then, of course, came the end of that phase. In order to seal the deal, Jesus had to atone for our wrongdoing. He suffered in a way that no one else had or could. Not only was He beaten and crucified (not unique events, I’m afraid), He was afflicted for every sin. Every sin, so that His punishment would atone for them.

We now have the opportunity to live that life, forever in the presence of God. We can’t earn it. We can’t deserve it. We can be given it, if we remember Who that baby in a manger is and why it mattered.

By all means, enjoy your festivities and your family. I don't think for a moment that there's anything inherently wrong in that. My family had ours yesterday, and I'm quite content with it.

Please, though, don't leave that baby in the manger. He's far more than can ever fit in a manger, a stable, or any other man-made construct.

I am going to walk with Him on the other side of eternity. I hope that you are, too. It neither began nor ended with that first Christmas ... but it is a noteworthy waypoint. God came back to earth, bodily, to be among us after what we'd done, betraying Him before. Wow.

Merry Christmas.

Posted in [Bible](#), [Jesus](#), [faith](#), [religion](#). Tags: [Christmas](#), [Easter](#), [Eden](#), [redemption](#). [3 Comments »](#)

The game I want for Christmas

December 19, 2009 — wickle

Perhaps you were wondering how to celebrate a world in which Ben Bernanke could actually be recommended for another term as Federal Reserve Chairman. Perhaps you were wondering what to think of the fact that anyone cares what Henry Paulsen thought of the confirmation.

Well, inventor Tim Hunkin has made the perfect game: [Whack-a-Banker!](#)

It makes sense, after all. What has a mole ever done to you or your country's economy?

The problem seems to be that the mallets are wearing out.

Posted in [WordPress Political Blogs](#), [fun](#), [politics](#). Tags: [banking](#), [Whack-a-banker](#). [3 Comments »](#)

Yes, Joe, really ...

December 19, 2009 — wickle

The other day, Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-CT) was reading a statement before the Senate, and his time ran out. Here's a quick video of it:

Sen. Lieberman's request for additional time is pretty routine. For the most part, Senators ask for additional time and get it, because no one cares.

Sen. Franken objected. Sen. Lieberman couldn't believe it. Later, Sen. John McCain whines about it (I'll stick that video at the end).

Really, this is very simple ... Joe Lieberman has been dancing between the liberal, moderate, and conservative wings of the Democratic party. Although he endorsed the Republican candidate for President, he wanted the Democrats to give him a committee chairmanship, which they did. In return, he's bounced back and forth on various bills. Right now, he's jerking the Democrats around on the health care bill. Whether he'll wind up supporting it in the end probably depends on what he thinks will get him the most headlines.

He's ticked off the liberals. Al Franken is certainly among those.

To be honest, I'm not a big fan of Al Franken. Prior to his Senate run, the only things I knew of him doing were two books — *Rush Limbaugh is a Big, Fat Idiot* and *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them*. Based on their titles, neither sounds like they're written for

people who discuss politics above the level of second grade schoolyard banter. I also saw his spectacle at [the book club luncheon](#) presenting *Liars* as Bill O'Reilly was presenting one of his books (*Who's Looking Out for You*, I think). He acted like a jerk. Ask me some other time why I was watching that ... it's a funny story.

Having said that ... I don't blame him in this case. It's not a very meaningful thing, but what Sen. Franken did was let Sen. Lieberman know that he isn't that well loved. He might not be entitled to the same treatment as everyone else.

Ah, yes ... This would be the video that goes on to show Sen. McCain objecting. You will note that after he waxes indignant about how this has never happened before, Sen. Levin points out that it happened a little earlier that day ...

Posted in [WordPress Political Blogs](#), [politics](#).
Tags: [Al Franken](#), [Democrats](#), [Joe Lieberman](#), [John McCain](#), [US Senate](#). [4 Comments »](#)

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